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Outline Of Reference Paper On:

No. 44, 1960/61

THE NEW COMMUNIST PARTY STATUTES

The pivotal point of the new Communist Party charter, released for discussions on August 5, is how much democracy should be allowed within the Party.

The draft of the statutes, to be ratified at the Party Congress this October, is studded with innovations of an ideological as well as of an administrative nature.

The new charter emphasizes the leading role of the Party much more than do the existing statutes. The rights and obligations of Party members have been modified, as have the rules governing expulsion from the Party.

The all-important Section III of the new statutes has been fashioned into a guarantee of inner Party democracy and of "faithfulness" to the principle of collective leadership. The main principles governing the moral and political upbringing of Communists have been reshaped also.

There are shifts of emphasis in the sections on the relationship of the Party with Komsomol and on the role of the Party organizations within the armed forces.

Analysis of these alterations reveals two new trends: 1) Considerable increase in the role of the Party as the governing force in Soviet society; and 2) a persistent drive toward an expanded inner Party democracy and toward increased Party activity at all levels.

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No. 44, 1960/61

THE NEW COMMUNIST PARTY STATUTES

The draft of the charter of the Soviet Communist Party, released on August 5 for discussion by all Party organs in the USSR, is to be ratified by the Twenty-second Soviet Party Congress in October, despite differences in top Party circles on how much democracy should be allowed. Discord was indicated by the wording of a statement in Pravda, following a preliminary discussion of the charter statutes and of the new Party program on June 19, which described the draft program as having been approved unanimously, while the draft statutes were reported to have been approved only "in the main." It is also significant that whereas the program was published on the date previously scheduled, the draft statutes appeared prematurely--on August 5 instead of August 20--suggesting that the Party leaders were anxious to push them through quickly to forestall further wrangling. Examination of the statutes and of the differences between them and the old charter demonstrates that the extent of inner Party democracy was at stake.

A striking feature of the new statutes is the considerable number of political and administrative innovations. For example, the preamble to the statutes has been expanded and couched in more persuasive language; the rights and obligations of Party members have been modified, as have the rules governing expulsion from the Party. Section III on the "organizational structure of the Party and inner Party democracy" has been given a new interpretation; the main principles governing the moral and political upbringing of Communists have been rewritten, and there are shifts of emphasis in the section on the relationship between the Party and the Komsomol and the role of the Party organization within the Soviet armed forces.

The first section of the preamble to the statutes emphasizes the leading role of the Party. Instead of the old version, describing "the Party as a militant union of like-minded Communists," the new formula affirms that "the CPSU is the voluntary militant, tested vanguard," not of the working class, as the old statutes declared, but of the whole "Soviet people."

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The Party does not now organize the "working class, toiling peasants and the working intelligentsia," but, according to the new version, "unites the advanced and most conscious section of the working class, collective-farm peasantry and intelligentsia of the USSR." The heavy emphasis on the large percentage of the social and professional elite in the Party is highly noteworthy.

The main body of the preamble was previously not a separate section, but simply constituted the first clauses of section I. They enumerated the Party's functions in the "gradual transition from socialism to Communism," in raising the material and cultural level of society, in rearing its members in the spirit of internationalism and in strengthening the "active defense" of the Soviet Union. The preamble has been greatly expanded in the new version and couched in resounding language, calculated to stress the impressive role of the Party.

Other new important points in the draft statutes include a reference to the foundation of the Party by Lenin, unnamed in the statutes promulgated under Stalin. The Party, says the preamble, has "liquidated the exploiting classes" and brought about and strengthened the "moral and political unity of Soviet society"; under the leadership of the Party, "socialism has scored the final victory." The Party "exists for the people and serves the people" and is the "external form of social and political organization which is the guiding and directing force of Soviet society"; the Party scientifically directs the constructive work of the Soviet people "toward the final goal--victory of Communism." The Party is guided by the teachings of Marxism-Leninism and has "resolutely come out against manifestations of revisionism and dogmatism and against factionalism and groupings; the Party is an inalienable, component part of the international Communist and workers' movement."

In the preamble, the Soviet leaders seek to identify themselves and the Party formally with the Soviet people by emphasizing inner Party democracy and "faithfulness" to the principles of collective leadership. The whole of section III of the statutes has been rewritten in the light of this assurance, and this section is now the first guarantee in the history of the Soviet Communist Party of inner democratization and of the elimination of any resurgence of dictatorship, whether by one man or by a group.

In section III, a new article (No. 25) calls for a "systematic renewal" of the Party organs by means of elections. At every regular election, at least one-fourth of the Party Central Committee and its Presidium is to be replaced, and the Party central committees of the Union republics and krai and oblast committees are to be given a minimum of thirty per cent of "new blood." In the case of committees for okrugs, towns and rayons, or the bureaus of primary organizations, however, at least half of the staff must be re-elected. Members of the Party Central Committee Presidium "as a rule, must not be elected for more than three terms (12 years) in succession."

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Members of all the ruling Party organs may be secretly elected for not more than three terms and secretaries of primary Party organizations for only two terms. In special cases, however, "particularly outstanding Party leaders may be re-elected for a longer period." At least three fourths of the vote by secret ballot must be in their favor.

Article 26 of the statutes spells out for the first time the circumstances under which Party members of the Central Committee may be removed from office: namely, if their conduct fails to justify the confidence placed in them and if they "forfeit their honor and reputation." Members of Party organs at all subsidiary levels are subject to the same rule, as are members of the Central Auditing Commission.

Article 27 of the all-important section III proclaims as "an important principle of inner Party democracy" the right of Party members to discuss controversial questions of Party policy both within their own organizational unit and within the Party as a whole. Previous statutes laid down the condition that broad discussions of Party policy had to be conducted in such a way as to exclude attempts to form fractional groups, not conducive to Party unity.

Article 28 of the same section endorses the principle of "collectivity" and declares that fresh manifestations of the "cult of personality and related violations of inner Party democracy" will not be tolerated.

Section I of the statutes deals with the rights and obligations of Party members. Many articles of this section, dealing with obligations of Party members, represent modifications or fresh formulations. The Party members now must: "struggle for the creation of the material and technical basis of Communism," "serve as examples of the Communist attitude to labor," "act as pioneers of all that is new and progressive," "actively participate in the political life of the country and in the administration of the state," "fulfill social duties in an exemplary manner and promote the development and consolidation of social relations," "contribute to the formation and upbringing of Communist man," "fight every sign of bourgeois ideology, especially tendencies toward private-ownership and survivals of nationalism." The new statutes state that a Party member has the right to "discuss freely questions of policy and day-to-day activity of the Party at Party meetings, conferences, congresses, and at sessions of Party committees and in the Party press, and to make suggestions and openly declare and defend his point of view..."

To augment democracy within the Party ranks, some changes have been introduced into the rules covering expulsion from the Party, and into Party penalties. For example, under the old statutes, a member who failed to pay his dues for three months without a valid reason, was automatically removed from the Party. But, after the new charter is ratified, such a case will be

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subject to a special inquiry in the primary Party organization and the offending member will be expelled only if it is established that he has in fact severed connection with the Party. All expellees will be given two months to appeal.

Inefficiency is to be combated with section II of the new statutes, which abolishes the extension of a candidate member's probation period. Previously, if a candidate member failed to prove himself sufficiently, the probation period could be lengthened. But now, after one year he is either accepted into the Party or refused admission.

Section IV makes some alterations in the clauses governing Party primary organizations, and it is noteworthy that now they are required to inculcate "moral principles," in other words, "Communist morality" as described in the new Party program. Apart from the three stereotyped Communist principles, "devotion to the Communist cause," "intransigence" toward its enemies and "fraternal solidarity" with the workers of the whole world, all the remaining moral precepts laid down are in the main no different from the age-old principles of civilized social behavior.

Two further differences between the new and the old statutes should be pointed out: a) section VII on "Party and Komsomol," states in article 60 that the Komsomol, "an independent social organization of young people, is an active support and reserve of the Party," and does not start off by declaring that the Komsomol carries out its work under the guidance of the Communist Party, as did the pertinent passage in the preceding Party Charter; b) Section VIII, article 65, emphasizes increased Party control over the Soviet Armed Forces by stating that "management of Party work in the armed forces is carried out by the Central Committee of the Communist Party through the main political board of the Soviet army and fleet." In the old statutes only the main political board was mentioned as responsible for political control.

The changes in the new Party statutes reveal three main policy trends: 1) toward greater Party control over society, to keep in check growing desire for democracy; 2) toward revitalizing Party activities, especially in its middle and lower ranks. The Soviet leaders realize that this is essential if the Party is to be successful in meeting the challenge of the new forces at work among the Soviet people and in channeling them into the desired direction; 3) toward inner democratization of the Party. The promulgation of this policy is a concession to demands both from within the Party itself and from among the population at large, and has been made largely at the expense of the top Party leaders. The significant new limitation on the number of times Party officials (except the one "particular outstanding" leader) may be re-elected represents an effort to thwart a would-be pretender to Stalin's supreme and uncontrolled power. Despite all the propaganda used to enhance his authority, Khrushchev is not enough of a dictator to be able to ignore the pressure of the Party rank-and-file, which is behind the limitation clause.